

Sermon: Conquering the Works of the Flesh

Text: Galatians 5:16-21

Day: February 25th, 2024

Where: St John UMC.

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Introduction:

According to Jesus, truth is a central concept in the teachings of Christianity. In the Bible, Jesus declares, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), emphasizing the significance of truth in the context of spiritual salvation. Jesus highlights the importance of understanding and living by the truth, teaching that it sets people free (John 8:32). This reflects the belief that truth is not merely a concept but a guiding principle that leads to liberation and righteousness.

Several teachings of Jesus emphasize the importance of truth. For instance, Jesus instructs his followers to "**let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'" (Matthew 5:37)**, stressing the value of honesty and integrity in communication. Additionally, Jesus warns against hypocrisy, urging people to live authentic lives rooted in truth rather than deceit (Matthew 23:28). Moreover, in the parable of the wise and foolish builders (**Matthew 7:24-27) The Wise and Foolish Builders**, Jesus illustrates the significance of building one's life on the foundation of truth, underscoring its role in providing stability and resilience.

These teachings collectively emphasize that truth is not only an abstract concept but a practical and moral foundation for a fulfilling and meaningful life.

Truth leads to freedom in several ways, according to the teachings of Jesus. First, Jesus emphasizes that truth exposes falsehood and deception, liberating individuals from the bondage of lies and deceit. By living in truth, people are freed from the burden of falsehood, hypocrisy, and the fear of being found out.

Furthermore, truth fosters genuine relationships based on honesty and transparency, freeing individuals from the shackles of hidden motives and inauthentic connections. This authenticity promotes emotional and spiritual freedom, as people can live without the anxiety of maintaining false appearances.

Moreover, truth leads to moral and spiritual liberation, as it aligns individuals with God's will and ethical principles. By living according to the truth, people are released from the guilt and moral conflict that arise from dishonesty and wrongdoing.

In summary, truth leads to freedom by dispelling falsehood, fostering genuine relationships, and promoting moral and spiritual liberation, as emphasized in the teachings of Jesus.

Conquering the Work of the Flesh

Galatians 5:19-21:

"Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, and factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warned you, as I did before: those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

The sins mentioned by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament:

1. Romans 1:29-31:

"They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless."

2. Romans 3:10-18:

"As it is written: 'There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one.' Their throats are open graves; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of vipers is under their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

In Romans 3:10-12, Paul is referencing multiple Old Testament passages to underline the universal sinfulness of humanity. Specifically, he draws from Psalms 14:1-3 and Psalms 53:1-3 to emphasize that all people have turned away from God and gone astray, and there is no one who is righteous, not even one.

3. Romans 13:13:

"Let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy."

4. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10:

"Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God."

Now, we are exposed by God as sinners regardless of who we are, where we are from, or what language we speak. This truth reveals why John the Baptist and Jesus made the purpose of their message the call to **REPENT**. **Matthew 3:3 and 4:17**

¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

According to the teachings in the New Testament, there are several practical ways to overcome sin.

Key principles and practices:

1. Embrace the Gospel: It is important to embrace the message of the Gospel, which proclaims the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ. By accepting the forgiveness offered through Christ's sacrifice, individuals can find freedom from sin and its power over their lives.

Galatians 1:7-9 ⁷ Which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! ⁹ As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

2. Renewing the Mind: Paul teaches the importance of renewing the mind and transforming one's thinking. By focusing on the truth of God's Word and aligning one's thoughts with the principles of faith, hope, and love, individuals can overcome sinful patterns and attitudes.

3. Walking in the Spirit: Paul encourages believers to walk in the Spirit and live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This involves cultivating spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation and a reliance on the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit to resist temptations and live a life that is pleasing to God.

4. Putting Off and Putting On: Paul uses the metaphor of "putting off" the old self and "putting on" the new self in Christ. This involves intentionally rejecting sinful behaviors and attitudes, and actively embracing virtues such as love, kindness, humility, and patience.

5. Community and Accountability: Paul highlights the importance of community and accountability within the body of believers. By surrounding oneself with fellow Christians who can provide support, encouragement, and correction, individuals can find strength in the journey of overcoming sin.

6. Growing in Faith and Knowledge: Paul encourages believers to grow in their faith and knowledge of God's Word.

7. Fleeing Temptation: Paul advises believers to flee from temptation and avoid situations that may lead to sinful behavior. This includes making wise choices regarding one's activities, relationships, and environment in order to safeguard against the allure of sin.

Resisting temptation can be a significant challenge, but there are practical steps you can take to strengthen your ability to resist and overcome temptation.

1. **Identify Triggers**: Take the time to identify the specific triggers or situations that often lead to temptation. By recognizing these triggers, you can develop strategies to avoid or mitigate them, reducing the likelihood of succumbing to temptation.

2. **Establish Boundaries**: Set clear boundaries for yourself in areas where you are most susceptible to temptation. This may involve choosing to avoid certain environments, setting limits on your use of technology, or establishing guidelines for interactions with others to minimize temptation.

3. **Seek Accountability**: Find a trusted friend, mentor, or support group with whom you can be open and honest about your struggles. Having someone to hold you accountable, offer encouragement, and pray with you can be immensely beneficial in resisting temptation.

Doing Good to All

Gal 6:1 Brothers and sisters, if someone **is caught in a sin**, you who live by the Spirit should **restore that person gently**. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

4. Practice Self-Control: Engage in prayer with God to receive Self-control, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Then, also engage in activities that help you develop self-control, such as regular exercise, mindfulness practices, and intentionally making small sacrifices in your everyday life to nurture the development of self-control in your life. Strengthening your self-discipline in other areas can positively impact your ability to resist temptation.

Galatians 6:8 ⁸ Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

5. Renew Your Mind: Spend time renewing your mind by focusing on positive, uplifting, and spiritually nourishing content. This can include reading Scripture, listening to inspirational music or messages, and surrounding yourself with material that reinforces your commitment to living according to your values.

6. Utilize Prayer and Meditation: Integrate prayer and meditation into your daily routine. Cultivate moments of quiet reflection, seeking God's guidance, strength, and wisdom as you navigate through times of temptation.

7. Replace Temptation with Positive Activities: Develop healthy habits and positive distractions that can redirect your focus away from temptation. Engage in activities that bring you joy, fulfillment, and a sense of purpose, thereby reducing the appeal of tempting behaviors.

Galatians 5:25 ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

8. Learn from Setbacks: If you do yield to temptation, resist the urge to be discouraged or give up. Instead, use the experience as an opportunity to learn, grow, and strengthen your resolve. Reflect on what triggered the temptation and consider how you can better prepare to face similar challenges in the future.

Remember that resisting temptation is a journey, and seeking support and guidance along the way is okay.

Remember that overcoming struggles with temptation is a process, and it's okay to experience moments of discouragement along the way.

Remember, you are not alone in your journey, and there is hope for growth and renewal. Be kind to yourself, seek support as needed, and keep moving forward with a sense of resilience and determination.

Quote of John Wesley:

"Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not whether they be clergymen or laymen, they alone will shake the gates of Hell and set up the kingdom of Heaven upon Earth." - John Wesley.

Conclusion:

By deepening their understanding of the Scriptures, individuals can gain insight into God's will and develop spiritual maturity that equips them to resist sin and live victoriously.

By incorporating these practices into your daily routine, you can cultivate a spirit-centered approach to life that aligns with your spiritual values and beliefs. Remember that waking in the spirit is a journey of intentionality and practice, and each day offers new opportunities for spiritual growth and connection.

These practical principles and practices drawn from the New Testament teachings provide a framework for overcoming sin and living a life that honors God. By integrating these teachings into daily life, believers can experience transformation and freedom from the power of sin.

A Prayer on Conquering the Works of the Flesh:

Gracious and loving Father,

Grant us the wisdom to recognize these temptations and the courage to overcome them. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, that we may walk in step with you, producing the fruits of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. May our lives be a testimony to your transformative power as we strive to live in accordance with your will. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit empower you to conquer the works of the flesh and walk in the spirit, producing the abundant fruits of righteousness. Go in peace, serving the Lord with gladness and fidelity. Amen.